CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

12. It is now exactly a year since the new Constitution in this State was inaugurated. Though it is too early to assess the real value of this constitution, sufficient experience has been gained to warrant the conclusion that the objective which His Highness the Maharaja and his advisers had in view has been amply realised. The constitution has had many critics, especially outside this State. Cochin can claim today that in the three great spheres of State activity she has reached a stage of development of which she can feel legitimately proud. Cochin today possesses a representative legislature with effective powers, an efficient executive with real popular control over certain departments, and an independent judiciary which enforces the rule of law. Let me examine in a brief manner the validity of this three-fold claim which I make.

THE LEGISLATURE

13. The Legislative Council has a strong non-official majority elected on a fairly broad franchise. Almost every department of the State is exposed to its scrutiny and criticism. The right of asking questions about any of the activities of Government is unrestricted, subject to the observance of rules which are in force even in the most democratic legislatures. The Council has also an effective voice in the control of public expenditure. The extent of this control is the real index to the power and status of a legislature. There has been a good deal of misconception based upon ignorance about the financial power of this Legislative Council. Let me, therefore, dilate a little more on this theme. If you see the budget figure for 1115 you will observe that the net expenditure of the State, excluding the working charges of the railway, is Rs. 90·61 lakhs. The working expenses on the railways have to be excluded, because they are an inevitable item of expenditure in a commercial concern and the expenditure is really controlled by the South Indian Railway Company on our behalf. Out of this net expenditure of Rs. 90·61 lakhs, the voted expenditure comes to Rs. 59·72 lakhs and the non-voted expenditure comes to Rs. 30·89 lakhs. If you analyse the various items of non-voted expenditure in greater detail, you will find that a great deal of it relates to expenditure of an obligatory character which must be necessarily voted by the Legislative Council even if the Council had technically the power of voting on these items. The expenditure of Rs. 7·50 lakhs for the Palace, of Rs. 2 lakhs for Subsidy to the British Government, of Rs. 4·34 lakhs under "Pensions and Gratuities," of Rs. 6·11 lakhs under "Interests and Sinking Fund Charges," of Rs. 1·69 lakhs under "Refunds relating to Income-tax and tax on Match Excise" and Rs. 87,000 under "Religious and Charities" make a total of Rs. 22·51 lakhs under the non-voted items. For purposes

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